News and Gossip of the Theatrical World

Drama of Moral Tone Is New Problem Play By Channing Pollock

AFTER the plethora of new productions seen in Washington this year ranging in character from maudlin sentimentality to fustian and bombast, it was a genuine relief to find in Channing Pollock's new play, "The Secret Orchard," something that merits serious consideration. It was like an oasis in a dramatic desert, for although the Pollock play is somewhat faulty in construction, its last act being especially weak, it nevertheless has the sinews of a big play.

It is true that Mr. Pollock's work must be viewed as that of the adapter rather than the creator of "The Secret Orchard," the play being a dramatization of the novel of the same name by Agnes and Edgerton Castle, but he has handled his story with such force and skill that he has vitalized and added dynamic force to the theme of the book.

The doctrinaire may take exception to the play on the ground of its moral tone, but such criticism seems out of place when critics and public alike have accepted and applauded such works as "Ghosts," "The Kreutzer Sonata," "Tess of the D'Urbevilles," "The Great Divide" and scores of others. Such plays reflect a certain phase of life, and while they are not to be commended as entertainments either for the youthful or for those who have not as yet been forced into contact with the more gloomy side of life, they place before the mind conditions which exist, and against which men and women must battle if they are to become potent factors in the betterment of the world.

The playwright whose influence is to be lasting must be a teacher, as well as an entertainer, and the darker side of life must be pictured if he would give his auditors an insight into the conditions which men and women who move and live in the throbbing world must meet. His work must at times show the consequences which follow infractions of the law, civil, moral or spiritual.

Mr. Pollock's text is a misnomer. His play does not answer the question: "If a man's sin be forgiven, then why not the woman's?" Rather does his theme lead to another proposition which forms the moral keynote of the play, "If a woman suffers for her sin, why not the man?" In the majority of problem plays which have been seen on our stage the moral lesson taught the erring woman is strong. We have our dying Camilles, our broken-hearted Zazas, our outcast Irises, and our demoniacal Hattie Friedlanders, but the men who bring woe to women who were once lofty in mind and pure of heart, are, in most instances, allowed by the dramatists to drop a hypocritical tear for the lives that they wrecked and then pass on to destroy more souls or else live in happiness in the bosom of their families, unsullied in reputation and not harassed by a particularly active conscience.

In "The Secret Orchard," however, we have the man a sufferer no less than a woman. Sin brings to him not merely a passing regret, but the keenest mental anguish. Nor is this anguish transitory. The Duke of Cluny is portrayed as a man of high mental attainments, with a fully awakened conscience and a temperament capable of the fullest enjoyment of the best that is in life. The playwright shows with skill that Cluny's fortnight of mental torture and contrition for his mad folly is not the end of his punishment. To such a man, who is at heart devoted to his wife, there could be no greater suffering than the realization that he has lost forever her perfect confidence and adoration. Therefore the punishment is lasting. Nor is the girl's expiation less bitter. A child old beyond her years, she is to bear with her through life the realization that the one man who is willing to sacrifice family, friends, social preferment, and official position for her sake, knows and feels the degradation that is hers. Is there to be found in any other play so forceful an epitome of the doctrine of retributive justice?

The moral tone of "The Secret Orchard" cannot be successfully assailed for its preachment is rather that man's standard of right living should be raised to that demanded of woman than that woman's should be allowed to sink to the level which is now permitted to govern the sterner sex.

Dramatically "The Secret Orchard" is woefully weak in the last act, which is entirely too long. Furthermore, the interest in the principals is disseminated by the needless introduction of many minor characters. This act should be rewritten. In the third act, however, Mr. Pollock has done a notable piece of work, especially in the manner in which he brings about the confession of Joy, the girl who has suffered at the duke's hands. When the duke's cousin, Dodd, asks Joy to become his wife she replies that she cannot, that she does not love him. He protests that he can make her love him.

A mere child, she scarcely knows how to withstand his earnest appeal. Believing that such a marriage is impossible, however, she reiterates: "I cannot, I cannot!" Dodd pleads that there could be no obstacle which his love would not surmount, that she is harboring some childish fancy in her innocent mind. Then in anguish and sorely distressed at his appeal which reopens the wounded spirit of the woman, Joy replies, "Ask the Duke of Cluny if I could ever become your wife!" A wonderful stroke of self-abnegation showing the keen sensibilities of the girl-woman who wishes this straightforward, clean-souled man to know her past so that he may forget his love for her. It is a touch of this kind, developing the character of the woman and revealing her capacity for suffering that makes the play a distinctly moral lesson. To have portrayed Joy as a woman incapable of the deepest pangs of remorse would have been to lose much of the force of the theme.

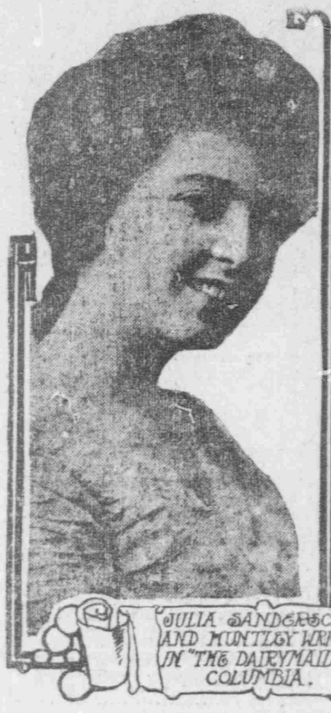
Two Kreutzer Sonatas.

To one who has seen Bertha Kalich as Hattie Friedlander, in "The Kreutzer Sonata," the performance of Blanche Walsh was as a shadow to the substance. The characterizations were no more alike than hyperion to a satyr. In the Kalich performance there was all the dignity and somber gloom of the tragedy of years, and the final outburst of murderous fury in the last act was but the natural sequence of the mental strain and the moral suffering that began in Russia ten years before. In the Walsh performance the climax seemed scarcely more than the suddenly unleashed passion of a jealous wife. The perspective of the tragedy was lost. A notable feature of the Kalich production which was lacking in the Walsh version was the time supposed to have elapsed while husband and sister were presumably at the opera. In the dramatization seen at the National last week the elapsed time was brief, and no provision was made for a verisimilitude of hours. In the Kalich production Hattie Friedlander sits at the window, the night gradually dying out of the sky and the shadows playing over the distraught face show the woman as reason battles with unreason, the latter finally conquering. Then the lights go out altogether for a few moments, and the entire theater is left in darkness, representing the two hours which are supposed to have elapsed while the man and his sister-in-law were away. It was a wonderfully impressive bit of stage business.

John Mason's many friends will read elsewhere in this department of the success which that popular actor has achieved in his new play, "The Witching Hour," in which he is the star. This, from the pen of Alan Dale, is characteristic of the many flattering things said of the new Thomas play: "At last a play—a real drama that never for a single moment descends into the ooze of melodrama—a play, big, vital, extraordinarily daring, relentlessly strenuous, and, above all, enlightening."

"The Girls of Holland" has met with the same chilly reception in New York that was accorded it in Washington recently, this, from the Evening Telegram, being characteristic of the reviews which it received:

"With a libretto so banal as that furnished for 'The Girls of Holland' last night, at the Lyric Theater, there was not much hope that Reginald de Koven could retrieve the 'comedy opera' with his music. By the end of the second act (there are three acts in the piece) that faint hope had dwindled and died."



"JULIA SANDERSON AND MUNTLEY WRIGHT IN "THE DAIRYMAIDS" COLUMBIA.

LULU GLASER IN "LOLA FROM BERLIN" NATIONAL.

CLARA BLOODGOOD & WILLIAM COURTENAY IN "THE TRUTH" BELASCO.

CLARA BLOODGOOD

BLANCH SHIRLEY AS "BERTHA, THE SEWING MACHINE GIRL" ACADEMY.

Mason's Play Is Telepathic And Big Hit

By A. H. BALLARD.

New York, Nov. 23.

THE best play of the year has arrived. It's "The Witching Hour," by Augustus Thomas, produced Monday evening at the Hackett Theater under the direction of the Shuberts, and starring John Mason.

Here, surely, is the play for which we have been looking—if by that phrase we imply that we wanted something grippingly interesting, intensely dramatic, a forceful handling of a vital subject, a literary delight as well as a vastly entertaining play. The foremost merit of the event is felt to be the strong and splendid talent of the author. He has unquestionably made a permanent addition to dramatic literature. The achievement is simply the apparently impossible feat of dramatizing the idea of telepathy. If you were to assign the task of making a good play for today's use on the elusive and borderland subject of thought transference without words, you might have hesitated as to whom you would entrust with the job. But Augustus Thomas has imposed the obligation upon himself and has succeeded beyond the credence of anybody who has not seen the play he has written. Furthermore, at this point it must be recorded, that, without the magnificent interpretation of John Mason and this brilliant company of players matters might have fallen far short of the positively startling success "The Witching Hour" scored Monday night.

The fact is that everything one could wish was exactly in line and in harmony with unequivocal and unimpeded triumph. Thomas has evidently grown to the ripeness of power, thought deeply and carefully on the subject, marshaled his premises with remarkable dexterity, to carve out the best drama of his career—indeed, possibly, one of the most important plays ever written by an American. In point of dramatic interest, artistic grace, intensity and cumulative appeal, in point of finish, deftness, ingenuity and masterly technique, there is nothing in the ranks of this year's Broadway productions to which we can compare it, except "The Thief."

It is just as well to admit frankly that we were all surprised at "The Witching Hour." The majority of the local press representatives and discriminating regular first-nighters made the mistake of going to the Frohman opening (Marie Doro in "The Morals of Marcus"), which occurred the same evening at the Criterion. I did not happen to be among the mistaken ones, luckily, and the only critics I noticed at the John Mason opening were William Winter and Glenmore Davis, who evidently came in for at least an act or two, of course, were spell-bound and remained to the end.

Unasked Questions Answered.

By Tuesday night the whole town realized that the play of the year had come, and now the buzzing talk is of "The Witching Hour" instead of "The Merry Widow." No description can adequately present the reason why this play is so surely plausible, impressive, piquant, haunting, inspiring, agreeable, fascinating. You see by the end of the first act that the author is certainly in his best vein—that you are in the presence of a dramatic entity with which you are eager to become intimately acquainted. You blink your eyes, listen attentively, and reflect that here at last is something distinctly worth while. The quiet confidence and surety of the playwright's touch win your admiration. You lose yourself in the story. In the first act, a judge of the supreme court, who is looking at some paintings in John Brookfield's house (Brookfield is a gentleman gambler in his Kentucky home) begins to answer unasked questions that had formed themselves in Brookfield's mind. Then you know that this great subject that is occupying the attention of thinkers the world over, is the theme of the play—the fact that every thought we think is a dynamic force, affects other people, and we are responsible for the thoughts we project into the world. John Mason is the central figure around which a thrilling tale is woven—around which romance, character drawing of the first water, a gath-

(Continued on Third Page.)

Lillian Albertson To Head New Play

For the first time on any stage, Wagenhals and Kemper will offer in Washington, on Monday night, December 23, a new play of contemporary American life, "Paid In Full," by Eugene Walter, one of the new school of American playwrights. On the same night in London, Miss Lena Ashwell, the distinguished English actress, will produce the same play, appearing as "Mrs. Joseph Brooks," while in the Washington production this role will be entrusted to Miss Lillian Albertson, who made such a favorable impression here early in the season in a minor role in "The Silver Girl." "Paid In Full" is in four acts. Directly after its engagement in this city the production will be taken to New York.

Charlotte Walker Returns in Stock

Summer stock plans for next spring in Washington are already being perfected. An arrangement was made last week which will be of great interest to local theatergoers. William A. Page, who managed the stock company at the Belasco Theater for fifteen weeks last summer, has completed arrangements to have two stock companies (one in Baltimore and one in Washington) next spring working harmoniously together and exchanging players, scenery, and productions as occasion warrants. The Washington company will be at the Belasco and the Baltimore company will be at Ford's Opera House. Mr. Page has secured a contract with Miss Charlotte Walker to head the Washington company, at the expiration of her season with Mr. Belasco in "The Warrens of Virginia." Robert T. Haines will be the leading man and star of the Baltimore company.

New "Shakespeare" Play No Go Among Germans

American theatrical managers who have been fishing for hits all season with but little success, are today laughing in their cuffs. They say the trouble with the drama is that the people's tastes are so bad, no one, not even the premier of them all, William Shakespeare, esq., could please a 1907 audience. In proof, they point to the cable dispatch last Thursday, which told of the virtual failure in Berlin of a new play from the pen of William Shakespeare, produced in the German capital this week.

As William has presented the playgoing public with nothing in several hundred years, considerable interest attaches to this new effort entitled "Antonius," a four-act drama produced under direction of the German Spiritualistic Association.

As the Bard of Avon is not upon the use of the modern typewriter, his personal hand is not in evidence in "Antonius," but of its genuineness there can be no doubt, as Medium Banffy, a leader of the German spiritist movement, says she received the dictation direct from William himself. Not only that, but Frau Banffy declares Shakespeare really staged the production personally, as he made many valuable suggestions concerning scenery, costumes and stage business to her.

Despite the previous successes of the author, German critics failed to warm up to "Antonius," and about the most enthusiastic quotation the press agent of "Antonius" gleaned from the German papers was one critic's opinion that "Antonius" was not so bad. In the opinion of most of the scribes, however, William's long vacation from playwriting has caused him to become a little bit rusty. They figure that he is probably a victim of the off-season. When Frau Banffy wants to dip into a calm of the psychic she should study under Augustus Thomas, who has just made the hit of his career with "The Witching Hour."

Miss Hawke's Play.

The annual productions given by Miss Hawke at special matinees for children will take the form this year of the old and much-beloved fairy story "Little Red Riding Hood."

The entertainment will take place at the Belasco Theater, Friday afternoon, November 29, at 2:15 o'clock.

Miss Hawke has arranged some very pleasing and entertaining numbers, which will be well executed. Little Red Riding Hood, the fairy queen, the wolf, and the mother will all be there to amuse the young folk.

The costumes of the children and stage settings will be attractive, and very effective; in all, making a most enjoyable affair.

OFFERINGS AT THE THEATERS

Clara Bloodgood, supported by William Courtenay and a carefully selected company, comes to the Belasco tomorrow night in Clyde Fitch's drama of lies, "The Truth." It is said that in this, his latest comedy, Mr. Fitch has written, in many respects, the best of his numerous dramatic offerings. At the same time, we are told, he has preached an eloquent sermon on the folly—as well as the inconvenience—of lying that ought to cause the laughter that his clever lines and amusing situations evoke, to be followed by serious reflection and good resolutions. Mrs. Bloodgood is an ambitious actress, and ambition combined with talent have made her advancement steady and rapid. Beginning as a "society actress," but, unlike most others of this class, adopting the stage not for the sake of notoriety, but because it seemed the most likely way of making her living, she soon became known for what she had accomplished instead of on account of her social prominence. Mr. Fitch draws many of his characters from the kind of society of which she had been a part. William Courtenay will be seen in the role of Tom Warder, the husband of the fibbing Becky (Mrs. Bloodgood). Others in the cast are John Emerson, Zelda Sears, Frank Patton, Mrs. Sam Sothern, Fred Courtenay, and Marianna Thurber. There will be a special Thanksgiving Day matinee.

THE TUNEFUL "DAIRYMAIDS" ATTRACTION AT THE COLUMBIA

Charles Frohman's "Dairymaids" visit Washington this week. The popular musical comedy which delighted London and New York audiences comes to the Columbia directly from the Criterion. The composer, Paul Rubens, has written some of the best and most popular music of the day, and his work shines with particular brilliancy in this, his latest work. Among the big song hits are "Mary McGee," "I'd Like to Meet Your Father," "Every Sort in Every Port," "Barcelona," "Twilight," "Lazy Land," "Cold Feet," "Down the Strand," "I Must Have a Lot of Little Girls Around Me." Principal among the fun-makers is Huntley Wright, who has created the comedy parts in most of the London Gayety's successes. With him are three able laugh-makers in Eugene O'Rourke, Edgar Aitchinson Ely and Langford Kirby. Julia Sanderson, the attractive young prima donna, is one of the dairymaids, and Bessie DeVoie, the sprightly dancer, is the other, while Freida Welgold adds greatly with vocal strength; Flossie Hope, the fascinating dancer, has a clever maid's part, while Ruby Ray and Emily Francis complete the list of comediennes.

LULA GLASER AS GERMAN GIRL IN "LOLA FROM BERLIN"

Miss Lulu Glaser and company, including Ralph C. Herz, in a musical play, called "Lola from Berlin," written by John J. McNally, will be the Thanksgiving attraction at the National, beginning tomorrow evening.

"Lola from Berlin" will give Miss Glaser a German dialect part. Lola is a simple German girl, who comes to New York in response to an advertisement inserted in a German paper, in which an heir to a large fortune in America is sought. She lands in America and seeks the lawyer who has the estate in charge, only to be mistaken for a servant girl for whom the wife had happened to advertise that same day. Through the mistaken identity is but an incident, for it is quickly cleared up, it gives the comedy a good start, for Lola, unable to understand or be understood, makes a laughable figure.

In addition to the regular matinee of Saturday a special afternoon performance will be given Thursday (Thanksgiving Day).

The supporting cast includes Ralph C. Herz, Franklyn Roberts, Jack Standing, Walter Pennington, Wallace Owen, George LaGuere, William Glaser, Florence Lester, Dillian Spencer, Lavinia Shannon, Vinnie Bradcome, and Minnie Lee.

MAJESTIC STOCK TO CLOSE WITH "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN"

Unable to undergo the strain required by constant study and rehearsing necessary to get up in a new play each week, Miss Kathryn Purnell has decided to end her engagement at the Majestic Theater. This week the stock company will present "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and Miss Purnell will then resume her road tour. Manager W. D. Fitzgerald originally intended that his organization of players would remain at the Majestic for the entire season. Owing to Miss Purnell's ill health, however, he planned to close the engagement here and will present her on the road in a one-piece attraction.

For this week's offering a wealth of special scenery has been prepared. Miss Purnell will be seen as Cassy, Ed. Redding as Uncle Tom, Arthur Pickens as Simon Legree, Franklyn Munnell as Mr. St. Clair and Mr. Shelby, W. Jeff Murphy as George Harris, Harry Bewley as Marks, Miss Della Deshon as Eliza Harris and Mrs. St. Clair, and Helen Hyle as Topsy. There will be a special matinee Thanksgiving Day.

"PULLMAN MAIDS" HEADLINE OFFERING AT CHASE'S

Chase's bill this week embraces McMahon and Chappelle's Pullman Maids, Julian Etlinge, the Colby Family, John E. Hazzard, Arnoldo's Arenic Sensation, Ford and Swor, Great Scott, and "The Aeronaut's First Flight" motion pictures. The Pullman Maids are said to be the liveliest and costliest novelty feature of the kind presented in vaudeville. Mr. McMahon and Miss Chappelle introduce their specialties and many interpolated songs, dances, and situations keep the frolicking at riot pitch. Mr. Etlinge will be the added attraction in his new "Gibson Girl" offering. The Four Colbys will give their original musical novelty, "An Evening Home;" John E. Hazzard a quiz on timely topics.

"BERTHA" AT THE ACADEMY AS "THE SEWING MACHINE GIRL"

At the New Academy this week the attraction will be A. H. Woods' production, "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl." It is said to be a most elaborate production in point of scenic settings and mechanical effects. "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl" is a story of New York city, where the "sweat shop" and "graft" abound.

There are four acts in "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl," which are divided into twelve scenes, some of which are said to be ingenious masterpieces of pictorial stage craft. The climax of the second act, the motor boat chase, is claimed to be the epitome of stirring realism. A motor boat containing the villain, his adventuress confederate, and the blind girl—a prisoner—is shown, dashing down the center of the Hudson river towards the sea.

Burton Holmes on Vienna Tonight.

At the Columbia tonight at 8:30 and tomorrow afternoon at 4:30 Burton Holmes will deliver his second Travelogue on Vienna. Mr. Holmes offers a complete pictorial presentation of the Vienna of today, showing the magnificent results achieved by the Viennese in their effort to create a "City Beautiful." Mr. Holmes will also show the near-by places of recreation for the Viennese, such as the lake district of Salzburg, and an Alpine climb to the peak of the Gross Glockner.

"Bon Tons" at Gayety.

This week's attraction at the Gayety will be "The Bon Ton Burlesquers." The program includes two burlesques, "Pousse Cafe" and "Girl From Mars." The list of vaudeville numbers embraces "The Girl With the Red Mask," "Six English Cocktails," Rawson and Clare in "Just Kids," Woods and Green, Hall-Room Boys, and Ben Pierce, that funny little German. There are twenty-four show girls with the company. The scenic effects, electrical innovations, and costuming are said to be beautiful.

"Lady Birds" at Lyceum.

A novelty is promised by Manager Alfred G. Herrington when he produces his Lady Birds Company at the New Lyceum this week. His production this season will consist of a musical extravaganza in two acts, entitled "The Isle of Somoa."

Nina Collins, formerly soloist with Sousa's Band; Ethel Lawrance, formerly soubrette with the Weber and Fields attractions; Isabel Hall, character impersonator; Tom White, Harry Fox, Frank Batie, Harry Young, comedian and tenor singer; Tom Jordan, the Clipper Comedy Four, are among the members of the Lady Birds Company. There are also twenty show girls.

Flashes from the Footlights

William Courtenay, who is Clara Bloodgood's leading man, will be costar with Mrs. Bloodgood in a new Fitch play next season. Mr. Courtenay was for several years with Virginia Harned.

One of "The Dairymaids" at the Columbia this week is Julia Sanderson, whose charm and beauty have made her a great favorite. Born of player parents, Miss Sanderson began in the chorus and achieved greater things by study, hard work, and application.

Ralph C. Herz, principal comedian in the support of Lulu Glaser, is the husband of the star. Miss Glaser's youngest brother, William Glaser, is also a member of the "Lola From Berlin" company.

Little Eugene Forde, who appeared with Blanche Walsh in "The Kreutzer Sonata" at the New National last week, has been on the stage since infancy. Master Forde, an unusually clever little "actor," is now but nine years of age.

Petite Cecil Spooner, sister of Edna May Spooner, the leading lady of Proctor's Fifth Avenue Stock Company, New York, will soon appear in her new musical play, "The Dancer and the King."

A new play for Grace George's next London season will be supplied by Clyde Fitch. Miss George has also accepted a play by Cyril Hallwood, the English dramatist.

Henrietta Crosman concluded her season in "The Christian Pilgrim" last night in New York.

John Hare, the English actor whose few visits to this country have been among the notable events in American stage history, has been knighted by King Edward.

Maxine Elliott has returned from London, where she had a successful season in "Under the Greenwood Tree." She will immediately begin her American tour in the play.

A copyright performance of "The Warrens of Virginia," the play in which Belasco will give Charlotte Walker her first experience as a star, was given in London, November 15.